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SUBJECT: MULTIPLE DIALOGUE INITIATIVES ATTEMPT TO ADDRESS TIMOR
CRISIS

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11. (SBU) Summary: Recent weeks have seen a flurry of dialogue and reconciliation efforts among East Timorese institutions and leaders. These have included series of meetings between the armed forces (F-FDTL) and the national police (PNTL), initiatives by youth group and gang leaders, and a high level dialogue last week involving all major political actors except perhaps the most important one, former Prime Minister Mari Alkatiri. The Church leadership also failed to show. All of these efforts have been organized with overarching coordination from the President's National Dialogue initiative, with the high level dialogue event receiving significant support from the Madrid Club with funding from the European Union. There is broad consensus on the necessity and value of such initiatives, but also some concerns. There are fears that the security institution dialogue is simultaneously serving as a mechanism for prematurely reactivating the F-FDTL, and bypassing accountability. The youth group dialogue is vital to reduce violent incidents in Dili, but not all key groups are participating in the initiative. The high level dialogue ended without much clarity as to next steps or any clear accomplishments. Whether it has further dividends will most likely rest on if it results in dialogue between Alkatiri and President Xanana Gusmao. End Summary.

Reconciliation between the armed forces and police

12. (SBU) The first significant move in series of reconciliation initiatives over recent weeks was a one-on-one meeting between President Gusmao and Brigadier General Taur Matan Ruak in the first week of November, the first meeting of its kind since the beginning of the crisis. According to Prime Minister Jose Ramos-Horta, the two had been willing to meet for some time, but neither was willing to take the initiative. Ramos-Horta reports that he therefore made the arrangements, even going so far as to go and pick up Ruak to convey him to the meeting. No one else was in the room to report on the conversation, but both men

reported being very happy with the discussion and agreed to move ahead with a reconciliation process between the F-FDTL and the PNTL.

13. (SBU) Gusmao then hosted at his home a series of gatherings over a three-day period, with nearly 80 members of the F-FDTL including all top leadership on November 8, a similar number of PNTL also including top leadership on the 9th, and finally with both groups together on the 10th. This was followed by a joint parade on November 15 involving about 300 of each in front of the Government Palace and presided over by the President, Prime Minister and President of Parliament. The initial very public F-FDTL-PNTL reconciliation was then followed by a number of further meetings involving the security institutions' leadership as well as political parties and youth groups. The main discussion at these meetings was on how the security institutions could work together with the various youth groups to define and implement confidence building measures within communities and internally displaced person (IDP) camps. However, to date it is unclear whether any specific steps have been agreed upon. Proposals that the F-FDTL and PNTL should conduct joint visits to communities and camps to demonstrate their new-found commitment to peace, were rejected by the youth leaders as premature and possibly inflammatory.

14. (SBU) There has been wide acknowledgement of this institutional reconciliation as a positive and necessary step in principle. However, a number of concerns have been raised regarding the way the process is proceeding and possible pitfalls. Primary concerns focus on the F-FDTL, as it is the institution that seems to be gaining immediately from the reconciliation, while the PNTL remains largely (although not entirely) contained by UNPOL and its vetting and reintegration process. It is apparent that the Ramos-Horta government and Ruak used the reconciliation events as a spring board to reassert the F-FDTL, which has now been granted rights to move about freely, and armed, in Dili for routine business (they are not to be involved in any law enforcement). Ramos-Horta has

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repeatedly emphasized his support of "normalization" for the F-FDTL, declaring that they should have same privileges as foreign off-duty troops to carry weapons in city.

15. (SBU) Another concern, primarily voiced by the PNTL, is that throughout the various meetings between the two institutions, F-FDTL officers have been allowed to carry weapons while all PNTL officers remain unarmed under current UNPOL arrangements. Self-suspended National Police Commander Paulo Martins expressed particular dismay at this and at one point refused to continue to participate in the meetings. This was again the case at the November 28 independence day event at the main stadium (reported septel), which featured about 100 armed F-FDTL flanked by a lesser number of unarmed PNTL. A number of PNTL officers have noted that this creates a fundamentally unequal dynamic between the two institutions. An additional concern, expressed both by many PNTL members and others, is that reconciliation and "normalization" of the F-FDTL will be used to bypass judicial accountability, in particular for the top leadership who were all recommended for prosecution for illegal weapons distribution in the UN Commission of Inquiry report. This worry has been underscored by recent statements from Ramos-Horta who has described the report as exonerating the F-FDTL (by concluding that there was no F-FDTL massacre on April 28), and seems to be willfully ignoring the report's other findings on the F-FDTL.

Concurrent youth group initiatives

16. (U) Concurrent with the development of the F-FDTL - PNTL dialogue, an "independent" reconciliation initiative sprung up among a number of youth groups (a term that in Dili encompasses a range from church groups to neighborhood gangs to large martial arts organizations). This initiative was at least partially organized by the President's Youth Commission for Dialogue. Prominent in this initiative were several

neighborhood gang leaders who have played alternately destructive and constructive roles, including Joao Becora, Jacinto Kulao and Alito Rambo. A number of youth involved in this initiative participated in the November 15 F-FDTL - PNTL parade, distributing flowers at the end of the ceremony. They also organized a series of peace marches during the weekend of November 12, "National Youth Day" and the anniversary of the Santa Cruz massacre. Beyond these mostly symbolic activities, these youth leaders have become increasingly involved in community dialogue processes to encourage the return of IDPs. However, there has concurrently been increased combative rhetoric among some of these groups indicating the potential fragility of their peace efforts and the likelihood of additional violent clashes between them.

High-level dialogue

17. (U) The Madrid Club, with funding by the European Union, has been for several months, in coordination with the President's National Dialogue initiative, pushing to bring about a series of dialogues involving mid- and high-level political and societal leaders. The initial series of mid-level meetings had only token participation by the ruling Fretilin party, and was ultimately overshadowed by the simultaneous F-FDTL-PNTL initiative described above. The high-level dialogue held last week was comparatively more successful, involving as it did all important political actors currently in country, including key members of Fretilin's top leadership. However, Fretilin Secretary General and former Prime Minister Alkatiri's absence,

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reportedly for medical treatment in Portugal, was a major gap.

Don't count on the Church

18. (SBU) Lutheran Bishop Gunnar Stalsett of Oslo and Former Latvian Prime Minister Valdis Birkavs attempted to set the tone during their opening speeches. Stalsett, a member of the Nobel Prize Committee who is playing an active role here in the

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dialogue process, is supporting though not directly involved in the Madrid Club effort. He relayed a tough message regarding the emptiness of "reconciliation" without truth or justice. Birkavs, who is leading the Madrid Club effort, made a robust presentation about looking to the future not the past, the meaning of leadership, and the need to work together with political enemies. However, they essentially stepped back and let the meeting run itself from there, with the President's Chief of Staff officially mediating. With no clear agenda or structure for the meeting, nor any preparatory work before bringing together such a large group, much of the event devolved into a series of familiar speeches and political posturing by the participants. At a November 23 briefing hosted by the Embassy for the diplomatic community and UNMIT officials, Birkavs said that it is not clear to the Madrid Club where to go from here. He noted, however, that many of the participants had expressed desire for continued dialogue with an emphasis on the need to arrange smaller meetings to allow freer conversation.

19. (SBU) The Catholic Church leadership also was notably absent from the high-level dialogue, the bishops having pulled out at the last moment and only mid-level Church leadership in attendance, which the organizers regarded as a major setback. It was not clear why the Church backed out, but recently the local bishops seem to be increasingly shying away from any activities even remotely related to politics. This is not true of the former Bishop of Dili, Carlos Belo, who reportedly will return here for a Nobel Prize commemoration on December 10. According to Bishop Stalsett, Belo was disappointed by the results of his visit here last month, when he failed to make any inroads with rebel leader Alfredo Reinado and was severely taken aback when a group of youths stopped his car in Dili and treated him disrespectfully, something he had never experienced here

before.

The missing piece: Gusmao and Alkatiri

¶10. (SBU) There is a widespread sense, at all levels of society, that until Xanana Gusmao and Mari Alkatiri can reach a workable modus vivendi, other reconciliation efforts, while important, remain built on weak foundations. However, getting the two to talk has remained an elusive goal. In a conversation with a Madrid Club official in late October, Alkatiri stated that he regarded the UN Commission of Inquiry report as invalidating dialogue because it was biased against him and his allies, but then stated that he would be willing to meet with Gusmao once the Prosecutor General had completed the investigation into allegations of his involvement in illegal arms distribution, and if they met first informally and as equals. Meanwhile, although Gusmao has been overtly supportive of dialogue, he has likewise demonstrated reluctance to engage directly with Alkatiri.

¶11. (SBU) Thus, perhaps the most significant outcome of last week's high-level dialogue was an explicit commitment made for dialogue between the two men. State Administration Minister Ana Pessoa, who spoke early in the day, regretted the absence of Alkatiri and remarked on the need to have a dialogue between Alkatiri and Gusmao. (Pessoa is very close to Alkatiri and her statement in this context can be assumed to represent Alkatiri.)

In his speech toward the end of the day, Gusmao noted his agreement with Pessoa that the high-level dialogue ideally should have included Alkatiri. He then stated that he would make every effort to bring about a meeting with Alkatiri on the latter's return. Whether or not such a meeting can begin to narrow their differences remains to be seen, especially in light of the ongoing public rhetoric coming from both of them. Many observers regard the two to be in a struggle to the political death. Alkatiri is regarded as determined to hold onto power at all costs and Gusmao's intent to possibly form a new party appears to be based on his calculation that this may be the only way to ensure a Fretilin defeat in next year's national elections. In this context finding common ground for productive dialogue will be difficult.

GRAY